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INSIDE THE BELTWAY

Sporkin's buzz /

As general counsel to the CIA, Stanley Sporkin certainly was accustomed to dealing with the most advanced security precautions available. But he met his match when he was appointed to the federal bench earlier this year.

Reporting to work at the U.S. District Courthouse in Washington, Judge Sporkin, like everyone else entering the building, was required to pass through a metal detector. When a buzzing noise sounded, Judge Sporkin walked around and passed through the detector again. Again he heard the same buzzing sound.

"The marshal on duty started to pat me down," Judge Sporkin recalled. "I looked down at the marshal and said, 'Can I ask you a question? Do you always treat your new judges this way?'"

The marshal, insisting that no new judges had recently been sworn in, nevertheless agreed to call the chief judge's chambers and see if he knew anybody named Sporkin.

A minute later the marshal returned. "It's OK. You can go through," he said.

— John Elvin